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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates the implementation of the Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR) project and presents the major lessons learned in the first 5 years of the NPCR's existence. During the past five years, 161 applied research projects have been completed by 70 neighborhood organizations working with 120 students from 10 academic institutions in the Twin Cities area. These projects focus on neighborhood planning and project implementation. Following an introduction, the sections are: (1) "Building Neighborhood Capacity"; (2) "Building Academic Capacity"; (3) "Special Projects"; and (4) "Lessons Learned about NPCR." An appendix lists NCPR projects completed from 1993 through 1998. (SLD)

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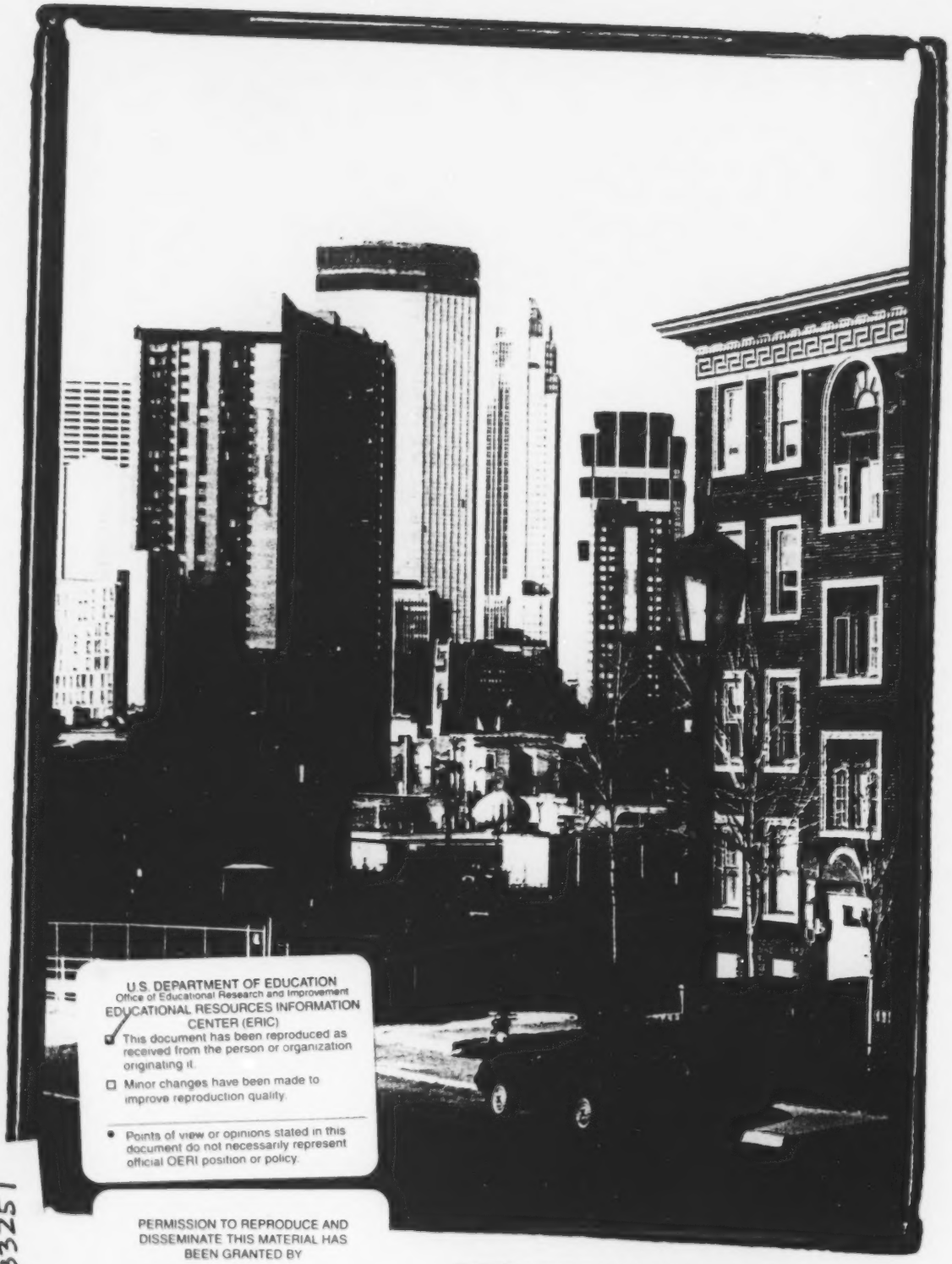

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NPCR

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The First Five Years of NPCR

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

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NPCR

Introduction

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR) helps strengthen the neighborhood organizations of Minneapolis and St. Paul by providing applied research assistance through a consortium of Twin Cities colleges and universities (Augsburg College, the College of St. Catherine, Concordia University, Hamline University, the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs, Macalester College, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, the University of Minnesota, and the University of St. Thomas).

NPCR began in 1993 as a way to help neighborhoods in Minneapolis take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, a source of funding for neighborhood planning and project implementation. In 1996 NPCR expanded to work with a variety of neighborhood-based organizations in both St. Paul and Minneapolis. During the past five years, 161 applied research projects have been completed by 70 neighborhood organizations working with 120 students from these ten academic institutions.

The Evaluation

NPCR has always used ongoing process evaluation to assess the effectiveness of individual NPCR projects. At the end of each project, questionnaires are distributed to the student researcher(s), neighborhood project supervisor, and the faculty and community mentors. Their responses have provided crucial information for improving NPCR. The process evaluation also includes follow-up interviews performed two years after a project is completed. These interviews allow NPCR to gauge longer-term impacts of projects. Data from the process evaluations allow staff to determine whether NPCR is meeting its goal of providing effective assistance to neighborhood organizations in a timely manner.

To assess how well NPCR has achieved its overall programmatic goals and determine what factors are critical to the program's efforts, an outcome evaluation was built into the original NPCR plan. Under the direction of Carol McGee Johnson of Multicultural Issues, in addition to analyzing data gathered through the ongoing process evaluations over the past five years, personal interviews were conducted with twenty-one faculty, students, neighborhood organization staff, funders, and NPCR Coordinating Council members during March and April of 1999. The purpose of the interviews was to draw out the stories and lessons learned during the involvement of these key participants in NPCR. Ann Marie Schultz, a graduate student in the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, wrote the outcome evaluation. Her document formed the basis for this report.

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This Report

This report assesses the extent to which original goals have been reached and presents the major lessons learned in the first five years of NPCR's existence. The report evaluates NPCR primarily from the experiences and perspectives of neighborhood organizations, students, faculty, and other NPCR stakeholders. Following a description of NPCR, Part 1 of this report explores the different ways neighborhood organizations have achieved the goal of increasing their capacity through NPCR projects. Part 2 discusses NPCR's success in meeting its goal of building academic capacity. Part 3 presents two of the special metropolitan-wide projects that have grown out of NPCR's work with neighborhoods. Part 4 discusses the major lessons learned from the first five years of NPCR and this outcome evaluation.

The NPCR Program

"NPCR is a great resource for organizations.
It has helped us to expand our ability to do work which is helpful to the community."

– neighborhood project supervisor, 1996

NPCR has two goals:

- to increase the capacity of Minneapolis and St. Paul neighborhood organizations by providing research and technical assistance that address neighborhood defined issues, and
- to provide faculty and students of local colleges and universities with useful, neighborhood-based research and learning opportunities.

The NPCR program is driven by the interests and needs of neighborhood organizations. These organizations, often with several staff members and a large number of neighborhood volunteers, develop project ideas, interview and select student applicants, provide supervision while the student is completing the project, and participate in a brief evaluation of each project.

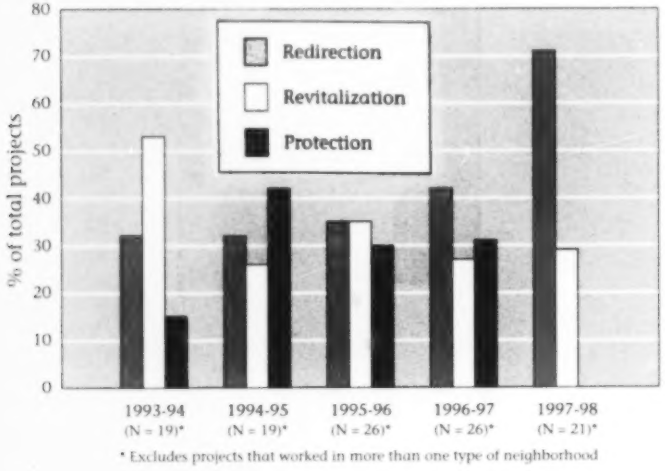
Students and faculty contribute research expertise. After a neighborhood project is selected for funding, students from all consortium institutions apply in a competitive process for research assistantships to work on the project. Paid by NPCR funds and working under the direction of the neighborhood, the student is expected to complete on time tasks from a detailed work plan, deliver a report to both the neighborhood organization and NPCR staff, and complete a brief evaluation survey.

NPCR also supports two faculty research projects each year. Faculty projects deal with issues of concern to more than one neighborhood. Projects are negotiated by NPCR staff between interested faculty and the neighborhoods that are involved.

Student researchers are strongly encouraged to work with both a community and a faculty mentor. Volunteer mentors are secured for each project and are asked to be available for up to five hours of consultation with the student. Community mentors often come from neighborhoods with previous NPCR experience. Faculty mentors come from the schools in the consortium and from a wide variety of disciplines.

In addition to applied research projects by students and faculty, mentors, and ongoing evaluation, the NPCR program includes technical assistance for both students and neighborhood organizations. Much of this assistance centers around electronic data collection, analysis, and presentation. Finally, through workshops, conferences, a web site, and active participation in a neighborhood listserve, NPCR encourages sharing of information and ideas.

In five years, NPCR has worked with sixty-seven of the eighty-one Minneapolis neighborhoods *(see map on next page)*. Minneapolis divides neighborhoods into three types: *protection* neighborhoods are "fundamentally sound"; *revitalization* neighborhoods "show signs of decline"; *redirection* neighborhoods "have extensive problems." Figure 1 demonstrates that NPCR has been especially involved with the neighborhoods most in need of support, the "*redirection* neighborhoods." *Redirection* neighborhoods account for the majority of NPCR projects even though these fourteen neighborhoods are only 17 percent of Minneapolis neighborhoods.



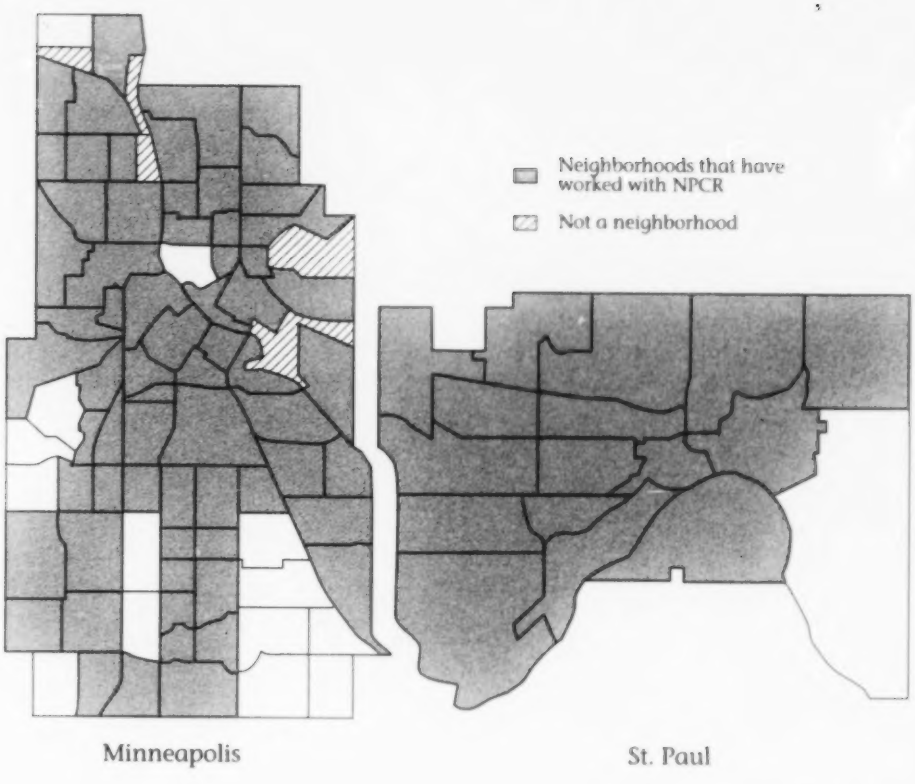
* Excludes projects that worked in more than one type of neighborhood

Figure 1

NPCR's Minneapolis Projects by Type of Neighborhood

Fourteen Minneapolis neighborhoods did not use NPCR during its first five years. All of these but two were *protection* neighborhoods. All neighborhoods are welcomed and encouraged to submit proposals for projects. Over 80 percent of Minneapolis neighborhoods have used NPCR resources in its first five years. Nevertheless, the majority of these resources are going to those neighborhoods judged by the city to have "extensive problems."

NPCR expanded to St. Paul in 1996 in response to requests from neighborhood organizations and with the financial support of local foundations and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Seventeen district councils represent St. Paul. NPCR worked with ten of these councils and thirteen other St. Paul neighborhood-based organizations on thirty different projects between 1996 and 1998 *(see map)*.



Minneapolis and St. Paul Neighborhoods That Have Worked With NPCR, 1993-1998

Part 1

Building Neighborhood Capacity

NPCR has achieved its primary goal of increasing the capacity of neighborhood organizations in at least five ways. It has increased neighborhood ability to: 1) address substantive issues, 2) collaborate and network among each other, 3) access and use technology and information, 4) learn through workshops and conferences and, 5) make sustained use of project reports. It is clear that neighborhood organizations value the assistance received through NPCR. Each of these points is addressed briefly.

■ Substantive Issues

"NPCR has increased the capacity of neighborhood organizations to address issues and problems in a more informed and sophisticated way."

– a neighborhood staff person

"Research was the missing link. Otherwise we might be fixing a problem and it wouldn't have been the right fix because it wasn't the real problem."

– a neighborhood project supervisor

By combining neighborhood projects with research provided by students and faculty from area universities, neighborhood organizations increase their capacity to make decisions based on concrete data rather than relying solely on "hunches" or "gut level" perceptions. Between 1993 and 1998, NPCR supported 161 projects that addressed 183 issues. The issue addressed most frequently by Minneapolis projects was economic development *(Figure 2)*. Housing projects and environmental projects were the next most common, though housing projects have declined since 1993. The number of organizational development projects, on the other hand, have increased.

Projects in St. Paul between 1996 and 1998 showed a growing interest in neighborhood organization development *(Figure 3)*. As in Minneapolis, projects dealing with economic development were the most common, accounting for 35 percent of all projects (ten out of twenty-nine). Some of the other topics addressed by NPCR projects are issues in the schools, social services, transportation, and crime. A few examples will illustrate how neighborhoods have used NPCR assistance with the issue they chose to address (see the appendix for a complete list of NPCR projects).

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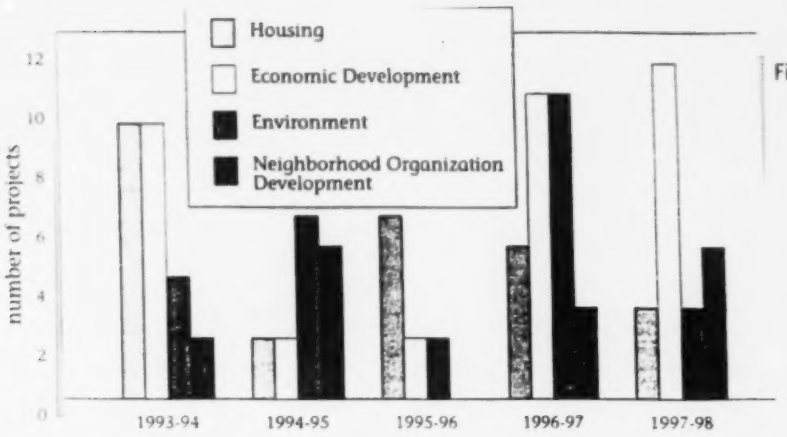

Figure 2

Issues Most Often Addressed in NPCR's Minneapolis Projects

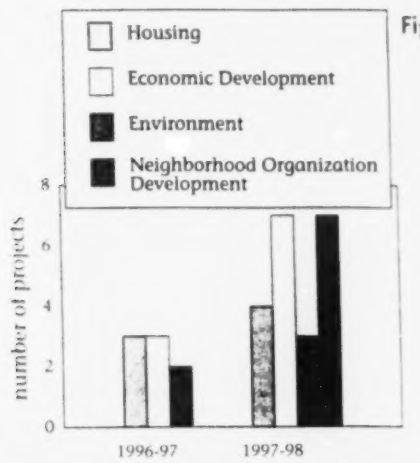

Figure 3

Issues Most Often Addressed in NPCR's St. Paul Projects

Home-Based Businesses

In 1994, the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association was in the planning stages of its Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP). Though some residents believed home-based businesses were an important part of the local economy, people were reluctant to commit NRP funds without documentation. Through NPCR, a student was hired to survey twenty-five of the estimated two hundred home-based businesses in the neighborhood. The researcher identified a number of common needs: marketing, business advice, help with a business plan, tax advice, office and meeting space, and financing. As a result, the neighborhood association set aside $10,000 of its NRP money to develop a home-based business association.

Similar studies of home-based businesses have now been done in five other neighborhoods and have led to the creation of home-based business associations in four of these neighborhoods. This work also contributed to an organized voice for

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Minneapolis home-based businesses. When zoning and regulatory changes were proposed that would affect them, the new associations, with the help of their neighborhood organizations, succeeded in modifying the proposed changes. A handbook on "How to Conduct a Home-Based Business Survey for Twin City Neighborhoods" was developed based on the experience of these five neighborhoods.

Alternatives to Metal Shredding

Stopping a large auto shredder facility from being constructed on the west bank of the Mississippi River led the West Side Citizens Organization in St. Paul to wonder what alternatives there might be to metal shredders. An NPCR student researched possible alternatives and discovered promising developments in Europe where automobiles are dismantled and recycled. By February 1998, an American company had been identified and was meeting with city officials and the community to consider the possibility of opening an automobile dismantling facility in St. Paul.

Restorative Justice Projects

In November of 1994 the Central City Neighborhoods Partnership proposed a series of projects to NPCR to make their neighborhoods more livable by discovering new ways to reduce the amount of street crime. Three related proposals on restorative justice were funded by NPCR between 1995 and 1996 involving students from the University of Minnesota, Macalester College, and Hamline University. A fourth project organized roundtable discussions between neighborhood representatives and city officials to determine ways that neighborhoods could work with the criminal justice system to curb crime and improve safety. A fifth project on how the principles of restorative justice could be put into practice in Minneapolis inspired several of the neighborhood representatives to develop the Community Conferencing Neighborhood Program. This program is now funded by local and national foundations and one of the student researchers has been hired as staff to create the first restorative justice program in the country designed for neighborhoods dealing with urban crimes committed by adults.

Accessing Housing Data

The Rondo Community Land Trust is expanding quality housing and ownership options for residents of the Summit-University and Lexington-Hamline communities in St. Paul. This NPCR study investigated the feasibility of creating a database to integrate St. Paul and Ramsey County housing information for easier access and mapping by neighborhood organizations. It found that housing information is kept in eight different local government departments, each with its own system, policies for access, and formats. The study served as the basis for a multi-organizational effort to work with the City of St. Paul in integrating housing information and making it more readily available, especially as part of a geographic information system.

■ Collaboration and Networking

NPCR has been successful in increasing the capacity of neighborhood organizations to work collaboratively. Through NPCR projects, some neighborhood organizations have chosen to work with other neighborhood organizations, other neighborhood-based nonprofits, or with community development corporations. This collaboration increases the voice of neighborhood organizations in advocating for their communities and their interests. It gives neighborhood organizations an opportunity to share ideas and information.

By the fifth year of NPCR's operations, 1997-98, 35 percent of the projects in Minneapolis and 33 percent of the projects in St. Paul involved other organizations *(Figure 4)*. Close to two-thirds of these collaborations (62 percent) were projects among organizations in two or more neighborhoods, while more than a third (38 percent) involved working with one or more organizations within the neighborhood (such as a block club or a business).

Neighborhood organizations have collaborated around many issues. In addition to the restorative justice example already given, a few more will illustrate how collaboration has been used in NPCR projects.

Abandoned Housing

One of the biggest challenges faced by Minneapolis' central neighborhoods is the problem of vacant and boarded housing. The Central Neighborhood Improvement Association wanted to reverse the cycle of decline that had set in. A student researcher reviewed studies of how other cities had successfully reduced housing abandonment. The researcher also worked with a neighborhood task force to identify the indicators that predict which housing will be abandoned. The project resulted in an "early warning system" that will enable the neighborhood to be proactive in preventing the

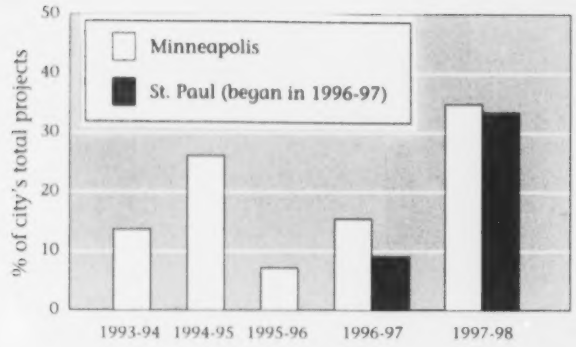

Figure 4

NPCR's Collaborative Projects

decline of its housing. The project also led to a collaborative proposal by the city and six neighborhoods for federal funding to work together to build a city-wide neighborhood early warning system through the city's new on-line data system. Finally, the project caught the attention of a St. Paul neighborhood which is now developing its own early warning system with NPCR help.

Commercial Corridor Planning

Seven Minneapolis neighborhoods combined in 1993 to form the Hennepin Avenue Task Force: East Isles, Lowry Hill, Cedar-Isles-Dean, Lowry Hill East, East Calhoun, Calhoun Area Residents Action Group, and Loring Park. With the help of a graduate research assistant, they assessed the commercial and housing markets along Hennepin Avenue. This contributed to plans for a more cohesive commercial corridor.

Employment on the West Side

In St. Paul, the Riverview Economic Development Association collaborated with the West Side Employment Network to gather information from local employers that could be used to coordinate resources for training, hiring, and retaining new employees. A directory of employment services was created and Riverview Works was initiated to provide job placement and coaching assistance to West Side residents employed by West Side businesses.

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■ Use of Technology and Information

NPCR provides a range of technical assistance to participating neighborhood organizations. These organizations are clearly pleased with the technical assistance. Several people commented that the assistance provided by NPCR's program director and staff is one of the key factors in NPCR's success. When asked how they value the assistance received, 86 percent of neighborhood project supervisors said it was "very useful" towards reaching their goals.

NPCR offers ongoing support to improve neighborhood organizations' ability to develop clear and focused proposals for applied research projects that can be accomplished in a realistic time-frame. This support ranges from personal meetings or extended phone conversations with NPCR's project director to simply reviewing a proposal draft. NPCR staff have seen a marked increase in the clarity and focus of proposals submitted and believe this represents a long term benefit to the organizations.

NPCR also offers assistance to student researchers and neighborhood project supervisors. After the student is hired, NPCR's project director meets jointly with the student and neighborhood project supervisor to develop a work plan. The work plan clarifies roles, explains objectives, and directs students towards potential resources of help in carrying out the project. This not only increases the chance of successfully completing the project but also helps the neighborhood supervisor who may not have supervised anyone before nor ever developed a work plan. Again, NPCR staff see these skills as important to the long-term success of neighborhood organizations.

Growing out of a research project initiated in 1993 by a group of Minneapolis neighborhoods, NPCR also provides assistance to neighborhood organizations in using the Internet. To increase the value of the Internet for Twin Cities organizations, NPCR has developed a comprehensive website (http//tcfreenet.org/org/npcr) which includes the publication of over 100 neighborhood research reports completed by NPCR research assistants. Links to other neighborhood resources on the web are also provided. NPCR's assistance with the Internet is described in more detail under Special Projects *(page 18)*.

■ Workshops and Conferences

NPCR has successfully involved the majority of participating neighborhood organizations in one or more workshops. NPCR conducts four workshops per year that provide an opportunity for neighborhoods and researchers to share accomplishments and ideas with one another. A wide variety of topics have been presented as this sampling indicates.

Neighborhoods and the Internet brought neighborhoods together to learn how to get online and use the Internet for sharing information and promoting neighborhood events.

Home Improvement Loan Funds showcased the handbook *(The Neighborhood Home Improvement*

Loan Fund Handbook) developed from the work of one neighborhood. More than forty neighborhoods attended the workshop and the handbook is now widely used by organizations in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Neighborhood Commercial Nodes presented the criteria and policies used by the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association in evaluating the viability and future direction of businesses in their neighborhood commercial nodes. The neighborhood sought to stabilize its economic base and help it grow. The workshop influenced later city policies.

"Research for Change" was a conference held in 1996 to reflect upon NPCR's work and the ways in which it might be improved and provide a useful model for community-based research. Strengthening neighborhood-university relationships was one of its objectives. The conference was attended by over seventy people, drawn from academia, various neighborhood organizations, and the community at large. Conference results included excellent participant evaluations; two new networks for community-based research; and, after several follow-up meetings, a successful proposal to the Minneapolis Foundation to establish the University-Neighborhood Network *(see Special Projects, page 17).*

■ Project Reports

Do NPCR projects help organizations sustain their work over time? To answer this question, phone calls are made two years after the completion of each project. Table 1 shows that project reports continue to be useful across all types of Twin Cities neighborhood organizations. In the first five years, over 80 percent of the neighborhood organizations reported that the research had proven useful two years later. In addition, the follow-up calls discovered that NPCR's research had been used in a number of other ways:

- as a baseline of information for decision-making,
- as an example and tool for other organizations to use,
- as a source of information for the organization itself and for the community,
- as a catalyst for advocacy,
- as an aid towards organizing,
- and for general planning.

Table 1. Follow-Up Survey Results, 1993-1998

	1993-1994	1994-1995	1995-1996
Total number of projects	22	23	31
Response rate	91%	87%	87%
Project was useful	85%	86%	85%

Several examples illustrate the sustained usefulness of NPCR projects.

A Housing Database developed for the Rondo Community Land Trust in St. Paul, as described earlier, not only continues to be used by the land trust but became the prototype for housing databases in at least seven St. Paul and Minneapolis neighborhoods.

Inventory Tracking for a new neighborhood business in Phillips (Minneapolis), a deconstruction program employing neighborhood workers, was designed by an NPCR student. The tracking system is central to the business's continued operation and one of the important pieces presented to other cities inquiring about deconstruction programs.

A Survey of Employers' Needs on the West Side in St. Paul led to identifying the barriers to employing persons with limited English proficiency and how these barriers might be addressed. This, in turn, led to significant employment of Spanish and Hmong residents. The success of this effort led to a follow-up study of successful school-to-work programs. Findings from this second study are now being implemented with West Side employers.

■ Neighborhood Response to NPCR Assistance

"NPCR is one of the best examples of collaboration between academia and the broader community. We've been able to get real good information that we wouldn't have been able to get on our own. Staff is too busy, they can't pull away to do focused research. It's been a huge help for us. It's like a marriage made in heaven."

–a neighborhood staff person

At the end of each project, NPCR distributes a questionnaire to each neighborhood project supervisor so that they may evaluate their experience and offer suggestions for improving NPCR. Ninety percent of the supervisors working with student researchers have found the NPCR projects "very useful" or "useful." Over 80 percent said they "would strongly recommend" NPCR to other organizations. Table 2 shows the results of this exit survey over NPCR's first five years.

Table 2. Responses of Neighborhood Supervisors, 1993-1998

	1993-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998
Response rate	88% (n = 43)	80% (n=20)	92% (n = 33)
"Would strongly recommend" NPCR	83%* (n = 35, 1 blank)	95%* (n = 19)	97%* (n = 32)
"Very satisfied" or "satisfied" with performance of student	90% (n = 39, 2 blank)	90% (n = 18)	91% (n = 30)
Project was "very useful" or "useful" to organization	97% (n = 40, 2 blank)	85% (n = 17)	97% (n = 31, 1 blank)

*All remaining respondents "would recommend" NPCR.

Part 2

Building Academic Capacity

The secondary goal of NPCR is to provide faculty and students of local postsecondary educational institutions with useful, neighborhood-based applied research and learning opportunities.

■ Student Experiences

There were 176 students hired for NPCR projects between 1993 and 1998. Some students were hired for more than one project, so that in total 120 different students worked with NPCR during its first five years. The proportion of women students participating in NPCR projects has risen steadily from 47 percent in 1993 to 63 percent in 1998. The percentage of students of color has varied over the years *(Figure 5)*. The 19 percent shown for 1997-98, though the highest of the five years, remains a concern to staff and consortium members who have recently instituted new recruitment strategies targeted at students of color.

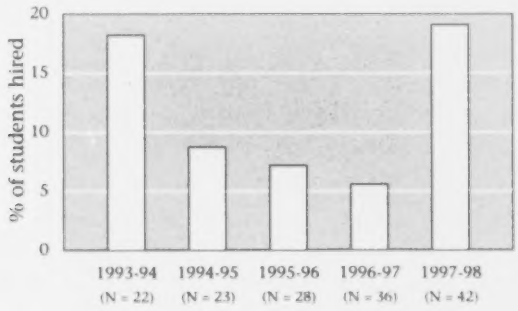

Figure 5

Students of Color Hired for NPCR Projects

Another concern is the number of applicants per job. As expected, graduate student positions attract more applicants than undergraduate positions. They averaged 7.4 applicants per job as compared with 5.6 for undergraduate positions. But projects in St. Paul, when NPCR first started there, averaged only 3 undergraduate applicants per job. The average went up to 4 the following year, and now equals the rate for Minneapolis jobs.

Undergraduate students are paid the same hourly rate, while graduate students, in addition to a standard rate of pay, may receive a tuition rebate depending on the policies of their school. In addition to these benefits, three others were most frequently cited by students when commenting on NPCR projects: mentors, practical experience, and career options.

Mentors

"My faculty mentor gave direction on where to look for information, brainstormed about community resources, helped revise the draft survey, edited the final survey, reviewed the results, and helped me think about presentation."

–student researcher

"My community mentor was helpful throughout. He was a resource person I could call to get quick answers to my questions."

–student researcher

NPCR provides both a community mentor and a faculty mentor for each project. A questionnaire asked students about their mentors and found that 68 percent rated their faculty mentors as "useful" or "very useful," 14 percent considered them "not useful," and 18 percent did not contact their faculty mentor. Students who were interviewed believed that more effort needs to be made to link students with faculty mentors. When asked about their community mentors, 80 percent rated them as "useful" or "very useful," 10 percent considered them "not useful," and 10 percent did not have a community mentor.

In response to process evaluation feedback, all students hired receive an information packet that describes various resources available that have proven useful to other students. Reports of other NPCR projects are used in both hard and electronic copy by student researchers. Each student is encouraged to take advantage of the open door policy of the NPCR project director and a call is made approximately half-way through each project to check on progress.

Practical Experience

"I absolutely loved my experience. I thought it was exactly what most students need to help them discover the practical relevance of their academics."

–student researcher, 1996

"I had the chance to see that people in a neighborhood can actually affect higher levels of government. I also felt like my schooling has a point; there is something I can do with my knowledge."

–student researcher

Based on questionnaires completed at the end of their project, students are almost always positive about their NPCR experience. Ninety-six percent in the first five years

responded "yes" to "Were your abilities recognized and respected?" Ninety percent said the project was either "very relevant" or "relevant" to their studies. Ninety-eight percent would either "strongly recommend" or "recommend" an NPCR assistantship to a friend.

Many students have used their experience for academic credit, including internships and thesis papers. Students are accustomed to learning in a structured environment where following directions is often the key to the assignment. NPCR projects allow students to work in the "real world" where determining what to do is often the greatest challenge. The learning environment provided by the projects not only teaches practical skills, but prepares students for challenges they may face in the future.

A work plan meeting, at the beginning of each project, brings the student, the neighborhood supervisor, and the NPCR program director together. The meeting helps develop a clear set of responsibilities and expectations for each person involved in the project. It was begun in response to feedback from early process evaluations. As a follow-up, beginning in year three the exit questionnaire asks, "How clearly defined was the neighborhood organization's objective for the project?" While the majority of both graduates and undergraduates thought that objectives were either "clear" or "very clear," 28 percent of graduate students and 47 percent of undergraduate students thought they were "not clear." These figures declined in year five to a total of 26 percent responding "not clear." This remains a challenge.

Career Options

"I discovered a new field which fits my skills and interests perfectly. This has opened so many doors for me. I am on my way to a career in this field. Thank you!"

–graduate student researcher

Approximately ten students have gone on to leadership roles with neighborhood organizations or to join a neighborhood organization's staff. Two students have become city employees working with neighborhood organizations. A student that assisted neighborhoods in using the Internet became a web site and database developer for the University of Minnesota's Extension Service. Even though the NPCR evaluation does not systematically track students beyond the exit interview, anecdotal information of students' career paths is available. NPCR staff estimate that of the students who remain in the Twin Cities, somewhere between a fifth and a third are employed in positions directly related to their NPCR experience.

■ Faculty Experiences

"NPCR has demonstrated that different kinds of public affairs and policy work can be done at the small grassroots level, that in fact, it often has to be done at the local level. Faculty spend a lot of time looking at a higher level context, such as state and national. NPCR has made more faculty aware of the importance of attacking problems at the grassroots level."

–a university professor

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Faculty are involved in NPCR projects as faculty mentors and sometimes as researchers themselves. Faculty who have been asked have always agreed to serve as mentors. Mentoring, several said, not only gave them a chance to learn more about local neighborhoods but also to appreciate the work and role of neighborhood organizations.

Faculty-directed research projects—NPCR supports two each year—usually include the equivalent of two months salary plus a half-time graduate research assistant for nine months. These projects deal with broad policy issues that are of interest to more than one neighborhood organization. By the end of 1998, nine faculty projects were completed. Topics have included redesigning a school, redeveloping commercial corridors in Minneapolis, assessing environmental risks with the aid of geographic information system (GIS) technology, and studying the effect of electric utility restructuring on low income households.

Some people in the community see the kind of community-university partnerships that NPCR creates as increasing the potential for a "new kind of scholarship." They see the wisdom of community people being used in solving problems while the value of research opportunities within communities is being realized.

No systematic effort is made to track the results of faculty research projects, but NPCR staff know that several professors have turned their NPCR projects into books or journal articles. One is *There Goes the Neighborhood?* a study of the impact that subsidized multi-family housing has had on market value and crime rates in one Minneapolis area. The book, by Edward Goetz, was published by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs in 1996. Another book, also published by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (1997), is *Handbook for Navigating Through the Commercial Corridor Process* by Barbara Lukermann. Professional articles have also been published by other professors in such journals as *Shelterforce* and *Cartography and Geographic Information Systems.*

Sometimes the results of faculty projects reach beyond publication. In 1996, at the request of the St. Paul Coalition for Community Development, NPCR supported Edward Goetz (Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs) in a study of the fiscal benefits of rehabilitating vacant housing in St. Paul. His report, "The Fiscal Impact of the St. Paul Houses to Homes Program," was instrumental in causing the St. Paul City Council to reverse themselves and restore funding to the program behind housing rehabilitation in that city.

Part 3

Special Projects

In its first five years NPCR has seen two special projects emerge directly from its work with neighborhoods and faculty. The first, University-Neighborhood Network or UNN, grew from the "Research for Change" conference, described earlier. The second evolved out of recurring requests from neighborhood organizations for help with computers and sharing information electronically.

■ University-Neighborhood Network (UNN)

"It is very valuable to have UNN maintain these contacts. It makes the university visible and relevant to the community and helps faculty in identifying problems."

–a university professor

"I firmly believe that the University of Minnesota and other colleges have a huge pool of talented people in need of practical experience. This cooperation could bring great resources to our neighborhoods.

–a neighborhood staff person

University-Neighborhood Network began in 1996 with support from The Minneapolis Foundation. The network brings neighborhood projects to academic classrooms, encouraging faculty, students, and neighborhood activists to work together in solving real problems. Faculty in eleven departments from four different NPCR consortium colleges or universities had participated in UNN by 1998. Thirty-two projects had been completed for twenty-two Minneapolis and St. Paul neighborhood organizations.

A half-time graduate research assistant works as staff along with faculty from consortium schools to identify courses that include a research component which may be relevant to urban neighborhoods. Faculty are asked to provide a course description and define parameters for research projects that might be included in the course. UNN distributes the course descriptions to neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Interested neighborhoods develop specific projects that will serve their needs while fitting into the context of the courses being offered. Before classes begin, faculty and neighborhood liaisons work together to fine-tune project proposals. When classes

begin, students are invited to choose a project. Students receive information about projects and about the neighborhood organization involved either on UNN's Web site or from a classroom visit by a neighborhood representative.

At the end of the spring term in 1997, a brief evaluation of UNN revealed that thirty-five of thirty-six student participants were pleased with the experience and would recommend participation to their peers. Seventy-nine percent said that their UNN project experience would influence their future work. Faculty were also satisfied with UNN projects because of the real world experience they offered to students as well as the opportunity to expand their own community networks. One professor said, "I think this work has opened some of our eyes, given us a new horizon to look at, about how to do a class and incorporate learning from the community." Eighty-nine percent of the participating neighborhood organizations were satisfied with the performance of the students and all said that they would use UNN again. The response from neighborhoods seems to reflect a broader desire to pursue collaborative projects with higher education.

■ Neighborhoods on the Internet

From its beginnings in 1993, many Twin Cities neighborhood organizations were asking NPCR for assistance with computers and the Internet. In 1995, with the help of the Minnesota Extension Service, the Neighborhood Internet Committee was established to promote Internet communication and information sharing among neighborhood organizations. NPCR's efforts in this area have resulted in establishing one of the most extensive networks of neighborhood groups on the Internet in the country.

Through Twin Cities FreeNet—an electronic community network—a "Cities and Neighborhoods" web site was established that now includes information about organizations in every Minneapolis neighborhood and St. Paul planning district. NPCR provided technical assistance to get neighborhood organizations connected to the Internet, as well as giving individualized training in using it effectively. This included wiring phone lines for modem connections, obtaining hardware and software, computer troubleshooting, instruction in Internet tools such as e-mail and the World Wide Web, and group training sessions on how to create Web pages. This kind of assistance continues to be provided.

By 1998 there were at least fifty-six neighborhood organizations with Internet accounts in Minneapolis and St. Paul. In addition, to providing direct assistance to neighborhood organizations, NPCR began to publish useful information on the Web. NPCR maintains its own Web site that includes descriptions of current projects as well as completed research reports. By 1998, the site contained over one hundred neighborhood research reports and was attracting over five hundred "hits" a month from people accessing these reports. By April of 1999 the site had received twelve hundred hits.

Part 4

Lessons Learned About NPCR

In-depth interviews with twenty-one faculty, students, neighborhood organization staff, funders, and members of the NPCR Coordinating Council during March and April of 1999 brought out several themes, patterns, and lessons learned about NPCR. Two basic themes emerged: ways in which NPCR is working, based on its original program goals and objectives, and new directions that might be considered to further develop and "grow" the program.

■ Ways in Which NPCR is Working

The people interviewed spoke enthusiastically about a number of program characteristics that distinguish NPCR. Those most often mentioned included following neighborhood agendas, working collaboratively, giving students real world experience, producing valuable research reports, offering excellent leadership, and perhaps creating a new type of scholarship.

Maintaining a balance of power in which neighborhood agendas drive academic research was often mentioned by those interviewed. They emphasized the uniqueness of neighborhood agendas driving the work of NPCR, rather than academic needs. This is a stabilizing factor in the NPCR model. Matching neighborhood needs to available academic resources has created a program balance of mutual accountability and benefit. The ways in which program participants—neighborhood organizations, student researchers, and faculty—all gain from participation in NPCR, as well as contribute to it, is another critical aspect of the model.

Collaborative principles and practices permeate and enhance the work of NPCR in a variety of ways. Through it, academic institutions are demonstrating sincere interest in building long term, meaningful relationships with neighborhoods and communities. This helps to dispel the notion that universities do not serve the community well. The manner in which NPCR facilitates communication and "builds bridges" between academia and the community is much appreciated.

Using a consortium approach for collaboration among academic institutions has created a broad base of resources that neighborhoods can draw on for research assistance. It has also enhanced relationships among education professionals.

Working collaboratively within the organized network of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program has also been a stabilizing factor for NPCR. It seems clear that students and neighborhood organizations do not compete for services. Rather, they play different roles in working toward the same goal. They are "on the same side."

Another often mentioned cornerstone of the NPCR model is students learning in "real world" neighborhood settings. Certain lessons can only be learned in the community. Through NPCR, students are able to increase their skills of analysis, argument, collaboration, and critical thinking, as well as clarify their career paths. Neighborhood project supervisors find themselves helping to develop future neighborhood leaders.

A key component of NPCR is increasing the capacity of neighborhoods to successfully pursue revitalization goals through research assistance. NPCR has increased the capacity of neighborhood organizations to address and deliberate about many of the issues and problems that they face. The ways in which NPCR does this were already discussed in Part 1 of this report. Neighborhood organizations especially praised NPCR for "making interns available to help grassroots organizations plan based on research data." NPCR's research reports are highly valued by both students and neighborhoods.

Excellent leadership is a key factor in NPCR's success. The "free assistance" and capacity building provided to neighborhood organizations by the NPCR program director helps to develop leadership at the neighborhood level and indicates NPCR's intent to provide needed leadership in a highly collaborative program.

The potential for a "new form of scholarship" exists within NPCR. This would be a scholarship that values practice, learning in community settings, and using the voices and wisdom of community people in solving the problems they themselves have identified. NPCR has already seen the value of such work and the rich research opportunities it offers to academic people. Its projects are already helping to create a new model.

■ New Directions in "Growing" and Strengthening NPCR

The people interviewed also noted a number of ways in which the work of NPCR could be strengthened and areas where growth would enhance NPCR's work. These included racial diversity, standards for project success, further stength in collaboration, and a few administrative challenges.

It was suggested that NPCR expand the diversity of people that it works with and deepen ties with people of color. Some of those interviewed felt that more neighborhoods and communities of color and more students of color could be involved in NPCR. This might stimulate more participation by people of color on NPCR's Coordinating Council. In the process, greater diversity would be achieved and a larger variety of community needs would be

addressed. Building relationships with "unofficial" or "unsanctioned" neighborhood groups was seen as a way of increasing diversity.

Setting standards for project success was a second area that could be strengthened, some suggested. Standards should be clear to all participants and easy to measure and share. Project success, it was felt, could be clarified on a number of levels. It would be good to develop ways to assure that students who are matched with a project have the skills and knowledge to carry it out. Initial planning should clarify roles and responsibilities of all participants (students, community mentor, faculty mentor, project director, and neighborhood residents who will be involved). It should also set goals and objectives, timelines, products expected, follow-up, and closure. Progress reports after a project is underway would be helpful. And faculty might be offered more incentives to work in the community. This would increase their level of involvement. They should also be held more accountable in mentoring students.

More strength, it was suggested, could be added to NPCR's collaborations by increasing attendance and involvement in the Coordinating Council; by continuing to scan the horizon for new partners that are working to build academic-community partnerships in ways similar, though not necessarily identical, to the NPCR model; by creating vehicles for faculty to talk to one another across campuses and disciplines; by looking for ways to enhance individual academic institutional relationships with their own "watershed communities;" and by continually assessing the extent to which a broad spectrum of community issues is being addressed.

Finally, a few administrative challenges were raised. It was suggested that NPCR assess what campus structures best facilitate full involvement of students in NPCR and whether the "right" individuals are working toward NPCR goals on specific campuses. NPCR was urged to look at scheduling problems and other administrative issues, such as student payments, that affect student placement and participation. And it was urged that NPCR create a stable base of funding for itself so that its availability for continuing neighborhood projects will be sustained long into the future.

Appendix

NPCR Projects Completed 1993-1998

Project reports are available at the NPCR website
(http://tcfreenet.org/org/npcr)

Crime

Applicability of Restorative Justice, Stevens Square Community Organization, Downtown Minneapolis Residents Association, Elliot Park Neighborhood Inc.

Crime Profile of St. Paul, West Side Safe Neighborhood Council.

Environmental Design as a Deterrent to Crime, Bancroft Neighborhood Association.

Inter-Neighborhood Crime Study, Stevens Square Community Organization, Elliot Park Neighborhood Inc., Citizens for a Loring Park.

Resident-Based Anti-Crime Program Study, Jordan Area Community Council.

Computer Resources

Community Computer Advisory Committee, Neighborhood Resource Center Coalition (same as above).

GIS Workshop for St. Paul Neighborhoods, Summit-University Planning Council, Hamline Midway Coalition, Greater Frogtown Community Development Corporation, East Side Neighborhood Development Company, North End Area Revitalization.

Neighborhood Computer Network Feasibility Study, Neighborhood Resource Center Coalition (Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association, Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association, Victory Neighborhood Association, North East Reps).

Neighborhood Revitalization Program Database, Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Neighborhood Revitalization Program Matrix, Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

User Survey for Loring Park, Citizens for a Loring Park Community.

Economic Development

Assessment of Commercial and Housing Markets for Hennepin Avenue, Hennepin Avenue Task Force.

Assessment of Green Institute Needs for Work Readiness Training and Employment Support, The Green Institute.

CARAG Home-Based Business Study, Calhoun Area Residents Action.

Commercial Reuse Study, Bryant Neighborhood Association.

Community-Based Response to "Welfare Reform"—Related Changes, West Bank Community Development Corporation, Inc.

Dayton's Bluff Commercial Inventory, Dayton's Bluff District 4 Council.

Development of a Neighborhood Job Database, People of Phillips.

Documentation of Business Contributions to the Longfellow Community, Longfellow Community Council and Greater Lake Street Area Council.

East 38th Street Development Study, Bancroft Neighborhood Association, Bryant Neighborhood Organization, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association.

Economic Development in Phillips, People of Phillips.

Economic Development Strategies in District 10, District 10 Como Community Council.

Economic Development Strategies in Powderhorn Park, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association.

Economic Development Study of Southeast Industrial Area, Prospect Park/East River Road Improvement Association.

Evaluation of a Local Job Program, Stevens Square Community Organization.

EPNI Jobs Program, Elliot Park Neighborhood Inc.

Home-Based Business Network, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association.

Home-Based Business Survey, Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association.

Home-Based Business Survey, Whittier Alliance.

Home-Based Business Survey and Development of Neighborhood Business Directory, Field-Regina-Northrop Neighborhood Revitalization Project.

The Impact of Welfare Reform on the Summit-University Community, Summit-University Planning Council.

Inventory and Survey of Franklin Avenue Businesses, People of Phillips.

Lake Street Business Profile, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association.

Market Analysis for Glenwood Avenue, Harrison Neighborhood Association.

Micro Venture Fund, Minneapolis Consortium of Community Developers and Phillips Community Development Corporation.

Minneapolis Commercial Corridors Redevelopment, a faculty-directed project by Prof. Barbara Lukermann, Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs, University of Minnesota.

Neighborhood Economic Development, Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization.

Payne Avenue Business Retention and Recruitment Program, East Side Neighborhood Development Company.

Phillips Welfare Reform Study, People of Phillips.

Recipes for Business Success—St. Paul Farmers Market, Neighborhood Development Center, Inc.

Seward Coop Buying Program Feasibility Study, Seward Neighborhood Group.

Southeast Area Employment Study, Prospect Park/East River Road Improvement Association.

Southeast Como Employment Study, Southeast Como Improvement Association.

Survey of Northeast Businesses Located on Central Avenue, Holland Neighborhood Improvement Association.

38th Street Market Study, Bryant Neighborhood Organization.

Urban Village Lower-Level Commercial Development Project, Stevens Square Community Organization.

Wendell Phillips Community Development Federal Credit Union Church Outreach, Wendell Phillips Community Development Federal Credit Union.

West Side Employer Resource Directory, Riverview Economic Development Company.

White Bear Avenue Small Area Plan, North East Neighborhood Development Corporation.

Whittier Works Employer Identification Study, Whittier Community Development Corporation.

Working Through Language Barriers, Riverview Economic Development Association.

Environment

Abandoned Gas Station Inventory/Northside Minneapolis, Jordan Area Community Council.

Bird Foraging Study, Kenny Neighborhood Association.

Diamond Lake: Analysis of a Wetland and Projections for the Future, Hale, Page, Diamond Lake Community Association.

Eco-Industrial Deconstruction Evaluation, The Green Institute.

Environmental Overview, Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association.

Environmental Profile, Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association.

Environmental Profile of Companies in Columbia Park, Columbia Park Neighborhood Association.

Green Institute Baseline Study in Phillips, The Green Institute.

Green Institute Deconstruction Health & Safety Issues in Phillips, a faculty-directed project by Prof. Fay Thompson, Public Health, University of Minnesota.

Hale, Page, Diamond Lake Noise Study, Hale, Page, Diamond Lake Community Association.

Health and Safety Considerations in the Deconstruction Industry, a faculty-directed project by Prof. Fay Thompson, Public Health, University of Minnesota.

Marcy-Holmes Commercial Recycling Program, Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Mississippi River Gorge Research Project, Seward Neighborhood Group.

Mississippi River Upper Harbor Terminal Site Study, Hawthorne Area Community Council and Citizens for a Better Environment.

NO SHAMS! Automobile Recycling Study, West Side Citizens Organization.

NO SHAMS! Environmental Inventory, West Side Citizens Organization.

North End Targeted Revitalization Areas, North End Area Revitalization, Inc.

Overview of Grass Lake, Kenny Neighborhood Association.

Prospect Park Environmental Inventory, Prospect Park/East River Road Improvement Association and Southeast Como Improvement Association.

History

CARAG Neighborhood History, Calhoun Area Residents Action Group.

Neighborhood History, Hale, Page, Diamond Lake Community Association.

Neighborhood History and Brochure, Windom Community Council.

St. Anthony East History, St. Anthony East Neighborhood Association.

Stevens Square Neighborhood History, Stevens Square Community Organization.

Survey Of Historic Buildings, Nicollet Island-East Bank Project Area Committee.

Housing

An Analysis of Factors Influencing Property Value Changes, McKinley Community.

Assessing Barriers to Renter Involvement, Jordan Area Community Council.

Boarded Housing Reoccupation, Central Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Cleveland Housing Study, Cleveland Neighborhood Association.

Developing a Baseline Housing Database, East Side Neighborhood Development Company, Inc.

East Side Employer Assisted Home Ownership Market Research Project, Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. and Phalen Corridor Initiative Housing Task Force.

Examination of Housing Adjacent to I35W and 62 Crosstown, Hale, Page, Diamond Lake Community Association.

Extent & Impact of Contract for Deed Sales in Frogtown, Greater Frogtown Community Development Corporation.

Exterior Property Survey and Improvement Program Design, Field-Regina-Northrop Neighborhood Revitalization Project.

Factors That Contribute to Boarded Housing, Central Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Feasibility Study for a Community Housing Trust, Stevens Square Community Organization.

Fiscal Impacts of the St. Paul Houses to Homes Program, a faculty-directed project by Prof. Edward Goetz, Apparel, Housing and Design, University of Minnesota.

Hamline-Midway Housing Database, Hamline-Midway Area Rehabilitation Corporation.

Historical Assessment of Holland Neighborhood Housing Deterioration, Holland Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Holland Housing Inventory and Database, Holland Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Housing Inventory and Prospects, Lind-Bohanon Neighborhood Association.

Impact of Multi-Family Housing on Urban Neighborhoods, a faculty-directed project by Prof. Edward Goetz, Apparel, Housing and Design, University of Minnesota.

Jordan Housing Study, Northside Neighborhood Housing Services.

Lexington-Hamline Comprehensive Housing Plan, Lexington-Hamline Community Council.

Market Demographics and Housing in Jordan, Jordan Area Community Council

Marketing Rehabilitated Housing, Hawthorne Area Community Council.

Neighborhood Housing Condition Assessment, People of Phillips.

Program Evaluation and Statistical Research Project for Home Link, East Side Neighborhood Development Company - HomeLink.

Rental Property Owners' 3-10 Loan Program, Whittier Alliance.

Research on Housing Needs and Interests for Home Improvement and Homeownership Programs, Whittier Alliance.

Revolving Loan Fund, East Harriet/Farmstead Neighborhood Association.

Rondo Housing Database, Rondo Community Land Trust.

Scattered-Site Housing: Where and Why is it Successful?, Fulton Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committee.

Sheridan Residential Property Survey, Sheridan Today and Yesterday.

Waite Park Housing Assessment, Waite Park Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committee.

Willard Hay/Near North Housing Plan, Willard-Hay/Near North Neighborhood Revitalization Program Housing Committee and Northside Residents Redevelopment Council.

Land Use

Fulton & Linden Hills Neighborhood: Indoor Recreational Spaces Study, Linden Hills and Fulton Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committee.

Land-Use Planning in the Summit University Community, Summit-University Planning Council.

St. Anthony East Architectural Survey, St. Anthony East Neighborhood Association.

22nd Avenue Greenway, Holland, Bottineau, and Windom Park Citizens in Action.

Neighborhood Survey

A/SANDC Sixteen Year Progress Report, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation.

Cedar-Riverside Community Resource Listing, Cedar-Riverside Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committee.

Light Up Old Highland, Old Highland Neighborhood Association.

Linden Hills Community Library Survey, Linden Hills Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committee.

Neighborhood Indicators, Lyndale Neighborhood Association.

Survey Compilation, People of Phillips.

Organizing

Evaluation of the Minneapolis Training Program for Neighborhood Organizers, Minneapolis Training Program for Neighborhood Organizers.

Hamline Midway Community Action Plan Research, Hamline Midway Coalition.

Implementation Issue (Neighborhood Revitalization Program Plan—Minneapolis Community Development Agency), Steven's Square, Central, Jordan, Phillips, Whittier, and Elliott Park Neighborhoods.

Including Single-Parent Families, Corcoran Neighborhood Association.

International Arts Festival, Willard-Hay/Near North Neighborhood Revitalization Program Marketing Committee.

Lynnhurst First Step Action Plan, Lynnhurst Neighborhood Association.

Personnel Management Manual, Seward Neighborhood Group and Minneapolis Training Program for Neighborhood Organizers.

Personnel Manual for Neighborhood Groups, Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

West 7th Accessibility Project – Diverse Residents, Fort Road Federation/West 7th Community Center.

Other

Art's Role in Neighborhood Revitalization, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association.

Electric Utility Restructuring and Low Income Households, a faculty-directed project Prof. Steve Hoffman, Political Science, and Prof. Joseph Kreitzer, Economics, University of St. Thomas.

Evaluating Neighborhood Funding Options, Lyndale Neighborhood Association and Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods.

Minneapolis Community Development Agency Neighborhood Policies & Practices, Harrison Neighborhood Association.

Profiles of Successful African Americans in our Communities, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation.

Public Health

Lyndale Health Care Study, Lyndale Neighborhood Association.

Outreach to Phillips Neighborhood Residents for Lead Contamination and Prevention Education, People of Phillips.

Schools

Community Involvement in Schools, Fulton Neighborhood NRP Steering Committee.

Hale School Redesign Project, a faculty-directed project by Prof. Garth Rockcastle, Landscape Architecture, University of Minnesota.

School to Work Programs, Riverview Economic Development Association.

Social Service

Child Care Barriers and Opportunities, People of Phillips.

Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council.

Fulton & Linden Hills Community Center, Linden Hills and Fulton Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committees.

Models of Successful Community Centers, Holland Neighborhood Improvement Association, Northeast Reps, and other northeast neighborhoods.

Seward Community Building and Youth Programs, Seward Neighborhood Group.

Sheridan Youth Employment and Activities, Sheridan Today & Yesterday.

South Minneapolis Child Care Demand and Resources Assessment, Phillips Community Development Corporation.

Youth Activities Project, Macalester-Groveland Community Council, Summit-University Planning Council, Highland Area Council, Frogtown's LEAP Forward for Children.

Traffic/Transportation

Bicycle Accessibility, Audubon Improvement Association.

Bikeway Planning Study, Kenny Neighborhood Association.

Central Avenue Parking Inventory, Central Avenue Steering Committee.

Linden Hills Trolley Way Redevelopment, Linden Hills Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committee.

Parking and Rent Survey, Calhoun Area Residents Action.

Parking/Housing Interface Cleanup Design, Holland Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Study for the Stone Arch Bridge Area, Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association.

Traffic and Parking Improvement in East Harriet Farmstead, East Harriet/Farmstead Neighborhood Association.

Transportation Development Study, Linden Hills Neighborhood Revitalization Program Steering Committee.

University/Raymond Parking Study, Midway Chamber of Commerce and St. Anthony Park Community Council.

Victory Traffic Study, Victory Neighborhood Association.

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